



The Service Beacon

A monthly publication for FSIS field and headquarters employees.

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service

October 1998
Volume 2, Number 5

bea-con (bēk n) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or inspiration.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The Service Beacon

by Glen Durst

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 202.720.3551

In June of 1997, Administrative Services Division (ASD) initiated a monthly employee newsletter entitled the *ASD Service Beacon*. It was intended to provide information and news to all FSIS employees on the core ASD activities. Since the first issue, we have had articles authored by ASD employees and our partners outside of the Division. Over the past 16 months, several managers within Office of Management (OM) have expressed an interest in expanding the coverage to include other OM activities.

This issue inaugurates a title change to *The Service Beacon*. Periodically in this newsletter you will be reading articles from such diverse service areas as telecommunications, travel, automated information systems, and others. This change will partially fill the void left by the former IRM Update published by the Automated Information Systems Division. You will find that each article will include the author's name, their telephone number, and now their division or organizational affiliation.

We hope that you will find the expanded coverage in *The Service Beacon* an effective communication vehicle between our authors and the rest of FSIS.

Business Cards

Recently, the U.S. Department of Justice rendered an opinion concerning the use of government funds for the printing of business cards for federal employees. We responded to this opportunity by implementing new procedures for obtaining business cards. To date, FSIS is the only agency within USDA that has viewed these printing regulation changes as an opportunity rather than a burden.

FSIS has just issued Notice 34-98 on standards and procedures for obtaining business cards. This notice establishes the policy and procedures for FSIS employees to obtain business cards for official use at government expense. Employees who interact with the other government agencies or the public are eligible to obtain business cards. Eligible employees may order cards by completing Form AD-270, Request for Copying/Duplicating Services with a supervisor's signature and forward it to the Printing and Distribution Section. Alternatively, employees may produce cards using their computers.

As you know from reading several recent articles in *The Service Beacon*, ASD has made a commitment to innovating the services that we provide. Certainly, our employees who interact with the public or others in the conduct of their duties need business cards. Our counterparts in the private sector enjoy the same privilege.

ASD to Move to Beltsville

On September 14, I announced that most of the 57 headquarters employees of the Administrative Services Division will be relocating from the USDA South Building in Washington, DC to the new USDA Beltsville Office Facility in Maryland. If the move progresses on schedule, ASD employees will be reporting to Beltsville during December, joining the Beltsville District Office, Compliance staff, and Emergency Programs staff.

The move was necessitated by renovations that will soon begin on the South Building as well as a lack of leased space available to USDA in the Washington metropolitan area. FSIS has lost significant space due to the pending first phase of South Building renovations.

We will advise you in a future issue of addresses, telephone, and fax numbers for our staff.

TRAVEL

Travel Charge Card

by Sue Ayers

Budget and Finance Division

Telephone: 202.720.5068

The current Government contract for the official travel charge card with American Express (AmEx) will expire on November 29, 1998 at 11:59 p.m. A new contract has been awarded to NationsBank with the Visa card that will become effective on November 30.

Travelers may have to use both the AmEx and the Visa card during a single trip, such as for travel beginning on November 29 or 30 and ending in December. The common carrier ticket will be charged to the AmEx card since the reservations will be made before November 29. The meals, lodging, and other expenses will be charged to the card effective on the date incurred. The lodging of November 29 will be charged to the Visa card.

All current AmEx cards expiring October 1998 will be renewed for the duration of the AmEx contract. Those renewal cards will be mailed in mid-October and will only be effective until the AmEx contract expires even though the card may show a later expiration date. If renewal cards have not been received by October 20-23, the cardholders should call AmEx at 1-800-492-4922.

All current and authorized AmEx cardholders whose accounts have not been cancelled or suspended should receive their Visa card prior to November 29. They should immediately "activate" their card by calling the appropriate telephone number provided even though the card will not be "turned-on" for charges until November 30.

The Fiscal Services Branch, Budget and Finance Division, which manages the Agency's charge card program for official travel, will continue to provide more information in *The Service Beacon* on the transition from AmEx to Visa as it becomes available.

Increase in Mileage Reimbursement Rates

by Barbara McNiff

Budget and Finance Division

Telephone: 202.720.3061

There has been an increase in the mileage reimbursement rates for the use of privately-owned vehicles. For all travel performed on or after September 8, 1998, the reimbursement rates are as follows:

Privately-owned automobile - 32.5 cents per mile
Privately-owned motorcycle - 26 cents per mile
Privately owned airplane - 88 cents per mile.

There has been no increase in the mileage reimbursement rates for high-mileage drivers.

Timely Submission of Travel Vouchers

Travel authorizations expire 30 days after the estimated dates of travel on the travel authorization. If a travel voucher is submitted after the authorization has expired, a new authorization must be issued and submitted to the National Finance Center (NFC). This not only results in extra administrative work, but also delays the receipt of travel reimbursements.

With the end of the fiscal year (FY) approaching all travel authorizations which were issued for FY 98 (October 1, 1997 – September 30, 1998) will expire on October 30, 1998. Therefore, it is important that employees who were on Type B or Type N annual authorizations

prepare and submit their travel vouchers to ensure they are processed before the authorizations expire.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Smoking Policy -- Q & A

by Jo Patterson

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 202.720.3033

The following are the most frequently asked questions concerning FSIS Directive 2500.2 Smoking Policy:

Q: Where can I obtain the Smoking Cessation Program Application forms (FSIS Form 2500-4)?

A: The forms are available from the Landover Service Center at 1.800.714.8335.

Q: What is the approval process for use of pharmacological treatment only?

A: A completed SF-1164 Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures. "X.B.2. Pharmacologic treatment fees are limited to a life time amount up to \$150. This reimbursement is in addition to and separate from the cost of a smoking cessation program.

Q: Who is the point of contact for information?

A: You may contact the Labor Management Relations Staff (Tel: 202. 720.4819) and the Administrative Services Division (Tel: 202.720.5500) for more information.

Q: Can we get reimbursed for doctor's visits?

A: No, only the approved smoking cessation program and any pharmacological treatment is reimbursable.

Q: What management code do I use on the SF-1164?

A: You should use the appropriate code for your program area, which may include the management code for your district, laboratory, or office.

ISSUANCE SYSTEM

FSIS Issuance System --

Q & A

by Mary M. Wissman
Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 202.720.8287

Q: What is the FSIS Issuance System?

A: The FSIS Issuance System is the Agency's means to provide employees with written instructions to carryout responsibilities. The System prescribes the types of written instructions (directives and notices), clearance and approval requirements, and distribution and filing methods. FSIS Directive 2610.1 Revision 4, "FSIS Issuance System," describes the System in detail.

Q: Why do we need the FSIS Issuance System?

A: Such a system is required and is beneficial to FSIS.

Requirement: Title 44 of the United States Code requires each Federal agency to establish an active and continuing records management program. The General Services Administration prescribes the policies and procedures for such program, which includes providing agency managers with the means to convey written instructions to users

and document agency policies and procedures through effective directives management.

Benefits:

- Provides an efficient, uniform method of communicating official instructions to employees.
- Ensures that proposed policies and procedures are coordinated and cleared with affected programs and staffs.
- Provides consistent agencywide filing methods for future reference.
- Allows for amending instructions through replacement pages.
- Provides finding aids (Index and Checklists) for locating issuances.
- Ensures the availability of copies to meet future needs (stocking/distribution/ electronic formats through Opendesk and the Exchange mail system (Outlook).
- Generates an announcement of issuances in *The Service Beacon*.
- Complies with Federal Property Management Regulations.

Q: Must written instructions to employees be issued through the FSIS Issuance System? Why?

A: Yes. It is FSIS policy to provide plainly written instructions for employees to effectively implement the Agency's responsibilities. FSIS policy goes on to say that all instructions will be issued as a directive or a notice . (See FSIS Directive 2610.1.)

The use of an FSIS issuance helps the Agency to:

- Pinpoint responsibility.
- Provide authority to act.
- Define working relationships.
- Describe the "should be."

- Prevent conflicting policies and procedures.
- Prevent "reinventing the wheel."
- Train employees.
- Provide reminders or announcements.
- Provide evidentiary policy and procedure.
- Ensure employee accountability.

Q: How long does it take to issue instructions through the FSIS Issuance System?

A: Anywhere from a couple of days to several months depending on various issues. For example, a notice that simply communicates an address change may take a few days; whereas a notice or directive that changes conditions of employment for the bargaining unit may take several months. The processes and timeframes for issuing written instructions to employees are as follows:

- Preparation of draft takes from a day to a couple of weeks depending on the issues involved, and the size and completeness of information.
- Clearance by Agency, when needed, takes 1 to 2 weeks. This process provides programs and divisions an opportunity to review and comment on policies and procedures that may affect their areas of responsibility.
- Approval by the Labor Management Relations Staff takes from a day to several months. If a proposed issuance impacts bargaining unit employees, the Bargaining Agreement allows a 20-calendar day period for review and comment. When necessary, additional time is required for consultation and negotiation.
- Approval by the signing official takes 1 to 2 days.
- Completion of printing and distribution takes from a couple of days to 2 weeks depending

on the size, construction, and intended recipients of the issuance.

Q: Where can I get additional information and guidance on the FSIS Issuance System?

A: Contact the Directives Management Section (DMS) at 202.720.8287. Future issues of *The Service Beacon* will answer additional questions, such as the following: What is the difference between a notice and directive? How do I initiate a notice or directive? "Who oversees issuing directives and notices?"

Recent Agency Issuances

The following notices and directives have been issued since the September 1998 edition of the *ASD Service Beacon*. Many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" library in Opendedsk and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

Notice 29-98 (8/25/98)
Reporting Fiscal Year 1998 Yearend Transactions

Notice 30-98 (8/28/98)
Time and Attendance (T&A)
Reporting Procedures for Pay
Period 20

Notice 31-98 (9/10/98)
Condensation Policy

Notice 32-98 (9/11/98)
Safety Procedure During Livestock
Stunning Process

Notice 33-98 (9/15/98)
Prevention of Reprisal Policy
Statement

Notice 34-98 (9/15/98)
Standards and Procedures for
Obtaining Business Cards

Directive 7222.1 (9/9/98)
Inspection Requirements for Food
and Nutrition Service In-plant
Control Programs

Directive 10,011.1 (9/9/98)
Enforcement Instructions for the
Salmonella Performance Standards

Directives and notices are distributed automatically to applicable Agency employees and offices. Additional copies are available from:

USDA, FSIS, ASD, PMB, PDS
ROOM 0157 SOUTH BLDG
1400 INDEPENDENCE AVE SW
WASHINGTON, DC 20250-3700
Telephone: 202.720.4661

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Lockout/Tagout Procedures

by Harry Springfield
Telephone: 215.597.4219, x-126
Tom Wright
Telephone: 202.720.3845
Administrative Services Division

In 1997, Field Operations began the implementation of "A New Step in Lockout/Tagout Procedures", which is a revision to the original Lockout /Tagout Program that began in July 1996. This additional Lockout/Tagout Procedure provides maximum safety for FSIS personnel and fully complies with the regulatory requirement in CFR Title 29, part 1910.147, The Control of Hazardous Energy (Lockout/Tagout). This additional recommended procedure includes entering into a cooperative agreement with federally inspected establishments for the use of a joint or group lockout/tagout process. This procedure ensures that a plant employee does not unlock or untag and re-energize a piece of equipment while FSIS employees are in the process of inspecting

equipment, by requiring that the FSIS employee place his or her own lock, or tag on an energy isolating device, or a group lockbox. The item number for ordering the Safety Locks needed to implement this procedure is FSIS-48. These Safety Locks can be ordered from the Landover Supply Center.

This new step requires that FSIS and Plant Management use FSIS Directive 4791.11, Revision 1, Lockout/Tagout Safety Procedures, dated 6/2/97 and the Self Instructional Guides to "A New Step in Lockout/Tagout Procedures for Supervisors and Inspectors" to develop and implement a Cooperative Agreement that will work in each operation. One major change from the original Lockout/Tagout Directive is that an FSIS employee is identified as an authorized employee.

Lockout/Tagout Safety Procedures, as instructed in FSIS Directive 4791.11, Revision 1, dated 6/2/97 and the "New Step in Lockout/Tagout Procedures" should already be in place in large HACCP plants and should be implemented at all other plants in accordance with the HACCP implementation schedule. There is no change regarding the plant's responsibility to have and implement an OSHA required Lockout/Tagout Procedure according to the OSHA Standard.

Recently, OSHA conducted inspections of the FSIS Lockout/Tagout Program at several plants and issued Notices of Unsafe or Unhealthful Working Conditions. The Notices centered on two areas. At one location, a cooperative agreement had been signed and FSIS inspection personnel had been trained on lockout/tagout. However, they were not actually carrying out the procedures. These procedures are designed to protect FSIS employees—Use them!

At the second location, the annual periodic inspection of the energy control procedure had not been conducted. This inspection is required by the OSHA standard and the FSIS directive to ensure that FSIS personnel are aware of their responsibilities under the energy control procedure.

Any questions concerning the implementation of Lockout/Tagout Safety Procedures can be directed to the appropriate Field Safety and Occupational Health Specialist (FSOHS) or the FSIS and Office of Field Operations (FO) Safety and Health Managers listed below:

Harry E. Springfield Jr., FSOHS for the Districts of Albany, Beltsville, Boston and Philadelphia
Telephone: 800.637.6681 or 215.597.4219, x-126

Ray Kobaly, FSOHS for the Districts of Atlanta, Jackson and Raleigh
Telephone: 404.562.5961

Carol Leonard, FSOHS for the Districts of Des Moines, Chicago, Madison and Pickerington
Telephone: 515.727.8980

Harry Thompson, FSOHS for the Districts of Dallas, Lawrence and Springfield
Telephone: 214.767.9124, x-896

Roger Perkerewicz, FSOHS for the Districts of Alameda, Boulder, Minneapolis and Salem
Telephone: 303.497.5411, x-247

Tom Wright, FSIS Safety and Occupational Health Manager.
Telephone: 202.720.3845

Robert Owens, Office of Field Operations Safety and Occupational Health Manager
Telephone: 202.418.8843

Fire Prevention Week

by Tom Wright

Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 202.720.3845

Fire Prevention Week will be observed this year during October 4-10. This year's theme is: "Fire Drills: The Great Escape!" On October 7 at 6 p.m., families throughout the U.S. and Canada are invited to participate in a unified North American fire drill, where everyone will be encouraged to exit their homes at the same time upon hearing the local fire department sound its siren/bells. The National Fire Protection Association plans to implement a fire drill theme through the year 2000, with the goal of increasing the number of households that physically conduct a home fire drill. FSIS employees are encouraged to participate in this activity and to replace the batteries in their smoke detectors during this observance. At work, Fire Prevention Week can serve as a reminder to review the fire escape plans to see if they are up to date and if co-workers are aware of them.

Safety Decals Program

by Betsy Kogan

Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 202.720.9968

The Environmental, Health and Safety Branch (EHSB) has been working on the Safety Decals Self-Certification Program (see the September issue of the *ASD Service Beacon* for more details). In August we sent out 9,200 forms to all GS-701's and 1863's requesting their participation in the self-certification program. To date, we have had approximately 1,600 of the forms returned.

As part of the reinstitution of the safety decal program, we are redesigning the decals and they should be ready by November. The decals and distribution instructions will be sent to all Circuit Supervisors

who have recipients in their circuit. If you have not received a self-certification form and would like to participate, please call me at the above telephone number to obtain the form.

SUPPLIES

Lightweight Helmets

by Pete Bridgeman

Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 202.720.5743

A cooperative effort is currently underway between this office, the Beltsville District Office, the ASD Environmental, Health and Safety Branch, and the Mid-Atlantic Council of Food Inspection Locals to identify and test a helmet that meets American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards but is significantly lighter than the current hard-hat helmet used in the field. This is primarily for the purpose of providing an alternative to the bump cap for poultry slaughter line inspectors.

We are now in the process of field-testing a helmet that meets the OSHA requirements for adequate head protection in a work environment. This helmet weighs approximately 9 1/2 ounces, which is 2 1/2 ounces lighter than the hard-hat helmet currently being used, while meeting the ANSI standards for head protection. The bump cap does not meet the ANSI standards and could convey a false sense of protection to the wearer.

We have ordered 50 of these lightweight helmets to be tested at selected sites in the Beltsville District. After 2 months of field-testing the helmets, we will meet with the participants in November to discuss the results, and if acceptable, we will add these new lightweight helmets into the Landover Service Center (LSC)

inventory. Stay tuned for more details!

Ordering Tips

When completing an order to go to LSC, it is important that you include the correct Item Number for each item you are ordering. If the Item Number is incorrect, you will probably receive an incorrect item. Please make sure that the Item Number reflects the number in the catalog for the item you are ordering. If you are not sure what the correct Item Number is, don't leave the Item Number column blank. This may slow your order down considerably. Please call us on the toll free number, 1.800.714.8335, if you are unsure about an Item Number, before you send your order in.

Likewise, the Customer I.D. Number must match the address we have in the system. If your address has changed, or you need a new account set up in LSC, you need to contact us at the Toll Free number first, and we'll make the necessary changes. LSC is not authorized to make changes to account addresses or to establish new accounts, so any orders that come in to Landover with incorrect address information get sent over to this office to research and confirm before they can be filled. The same happens to any orders that come in without a Customer I.D. number. This can slow the processing of an order down considerably. Please help us to better serve you by following these guidelines.

Welcome Sue

We're happy to announce that the Personal Property, Motor Vehicle and Supply Section (PPMVSS) has a new Supply Technician, Sue Miller, who joins us from Ramona Swann's staff. Sue will be the key contact for emergency supply

requests and order inquiries from the field on the toll free number.

VEHICLES

Transaction Code 17 -- What Does It Mean?

by Pete Bridgeman

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 202.720.5743

We get a lot of questions from GSA Vehicle drivers regarding the proper use of Transaction Code 17. Does it have to be used every time I drive the government vehicle home and back to work? What purpose does it serve? Whose responsibility is it to ensure it's being used properly? The intent of this article is to clarify the purpose of Code 17, when it should be used, who's responsible for properly reporting it, and what the authorities associated with it are.

What is it? The Tax Reform Act of 1984 required that certain employer-provided fringe benefits be considered as income for Federal tax purposes. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) determined that employer-provided transportation (such as a GSA Vehicle) between home and the point of duty is such a fringe benefit, and that for each one-way commute the sum of \$1.50 should be reported as taxable income. Transaction Code 17 was developed to capture these fringe benefit trips on the T & A.

Departmental Regulation 2600-1, Taxation of Fringe Benefits, issued on 2/21/90, clarified what trips are considered fringe benefits, and thus require the use of Code 17. When a Government Vehicle is used to travel between a residence and the official duty station, unless all miles on the trip would otherwise be reimbursable, Code 17 should be used. Each one way trip should be reported, however, it is not required if a driver makes less than 1 round trip a month between home and

work in the government vehicle, or less than 12 round trips a year.

As a rule of thumb, if an entire trip would be reimbursable if you were driving a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV), it does not require the use of Code 17 when driving a GSA car. If a trip would not be reimbursable in a POV, or would only be partially reimbursable, Code 17 should be used with the GSA car. (See FSIS Directive 3800.2 to determine when a trip is reimbursable).

If used properly, Code 17 allows accurate tax information to be compiled for the W-2 Form, Annual Withholding Tax Statement. In the event of a tax audit, any trips involving the use of a government furnished vehicle between the residence and official duty station which are not claimed under Code 17 would be subject to scrutiny, and if not properly claimed as fringe benefits, would result in a penalty and fine.

It is each individual's responsibility to provide the correct information for tax purposes. Code 17 was designed to simplify the process of claiming commuting fringe benefits.

Registration of Government Vehicles

by Brian McNiff

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 202.720.4162

The regulations governing the licensing of government vehicles are contained in the CFR Title 41, Subpart 101-38.2 – Registration, Identification, and Exemptions. The Agriculture Property Management Regulations complies with the above regulations. These regulations require all government vehicles to display government license plates unless an exemption is authorized. The regulation authorizes the use of state license plates on government vehicles used to conduct investigative or law

enforcement activities. Vehicles regularly used for common administrative purposes not directly connected with law enforcement, investigative, or intelligence duties involving security activities, shall not be exempted. The only government vehicles authorized to display state license plates are those used in support of our Regulatory Program and driven by our compliance officers.

Exemptions in addition to those authorized above must be submitted to this office in writing by the District Manager and must contain the following: (1) a description of the duties which mandate the use of an unidentified motor vehicle, (2) reasons why the use of unidentified motor vehicle is essential, (3) life threatening and safety reason for driver to have unidentified government vehicle. The request will be submitted by this office to the Department of Agriculture's Property Management Division and if justified the Property Management Division will forward to the General Services Administration (GSA) for final approval/disapproval.

Motor Vehicle Accidents

All government drivers involved in a motor vehicle accident must complete Standard Form 91 (Motor Vehicle Accident Report). It is imperative that the driver completes this form immediately after the accident and forwards a copy to this office and a copy to the Fleet Management Center that issued the vehicle. This form must be completed in detail and signed by the employee's supervisor. There have been several instances when claims have been forwarded to this office and we did not have a copy of the Motor Vehicle Accident Report on file. This situation causes a delay in the processing of claims and can result in the loss of the driver's protection under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

In cases when a government vehicle is involved in an accident with another vehicle, the driver of the government vehicle should provide a copy of the Standard Form 95 (Claim For Damage, Injury, Or Death) to the other party. You can obtain these forms from this office – we will accept written, faxed, telephoned or e-mail requests for these forms.

Our address:

USDA, FSIS, OM, ASD, PPMVSS
ROOM 2158 SOUTH BLDG
1400 INDEPENDENCE AVE SW
WASHINGTON, DC 20250
ATTN: BRIAN McNIFF

YEAR 2000

FSIS Status of Addressing the Year-2000 Problem

by Yann King

Automated Information Systems Division

Telephone: 202.690.3115

A popular and important topic these days is something called the "Year 2000 Problem", abbreviated as "Y2K." You probably have heard about it. The term refers to the danger that some automated systems or embedded-microchip equipment in government and business may malfunction or cease to function as the year changes from 1999 to 2000. There is growing concern about this problem. The Food Safety and Inspection Service is working to ensure that it is prepared to support the inspection program successfully as we cross into the new millennium.

A 17-member FSIS Y2K team was formed in the summer of 1997 to address various Y2K issues. The team members consist of a project manager, an assistant project manager, coordinators representing the FSIS IRM Steering Committee,

and system leaders and system programmers. Mr. Bill West, FSIS Y2K Senior Executive Sponsor, leads the team.

A brief summary of the FSIS Y2K project status is given below for your information.

(1) FSIS Mission Critical Application Systems

FSIS identified a total of eight mission critical application systems:

- PBIS (Performance Based Inspection System)
- AIIS (Automated Import Inspection System)
- RVIS (Residue Violation Information System)
- PCP (Planned Compliance Program)
- MARCIS/LSFS (Microbiological and Residue Contamination Information System/ Laboratory Sample Flow System)
- ADRS (Animal Disposition Reporting System)
- CORE (Common On-line Reference for Establishments)
- HPDESK (FSIS Electronic Mailing System)

Seven of these eight systems are to be repaired and one to be retired (i.e., HPDESK). Renovation work on the seven systems has been completed. They are being tested and validated for final certification. They are scheduled to be fully operational by March 1999.

(2) FSIS Telecommunications Systems

FSIS has identified 25 telecommunications and data network units, which provide support to FSIS mission critical service and delivery. The Agency has completed its telecommunications inventory including equipment, software, access and services. This has been entered into the Department's Telecommunications

Ordering, Billing and Inventory (TOBI) system. FSIS is assessing compliance by checking the GSA and manufacturers' web sites for Y2K compliance information. If not compliant, then contact will be made with the manufacturer for compliance upgrade. If upgrades are not available, the unit will be replaced. Again, the targeted completion date is March 1999.

(3) Vulnerable (Non-Information Technology) Systems

This is equipment with embedded microchips that could malfunction at the turn of the century. Examples include buildings/facilities, laboratory equipment, personal property (e.g., copy machines, fax machines, pagers, cellular phones etc.), aircraft, and motor vehicles. FSIS has built an inventory for the buildings and laboratory equipment. About 375 fax machines have been identified in Headquarters and the field offices. FSIS is in the process of checking those items for Y2K compliance. FSIS will continue the inventory list and will repair or replace non-compliant items. The targeted completion date is March 1999.

(4) Data Exchange

FSIS is communicating with outside organizations or entities to ensure that all automated data exchange activities will continue to function by the Year 2000. To call for attention and enhance awareness, FSIS has sent informational letters to about

6000 meat and poultry plants, 26 state inspection program offices, and three foreign countries who have import/export data exchange with FSIS. FSIS will continue to interface with outside entities to ensure compatible and good data exchange.

(5) Non-Mission Critical Application Systems

FSIS has identified a total of 26 non-mission critical application systems. Out of the 26, four of them need to be repaired. The owners of the four systems have been notified and a brief plan has been developed for each system to carry out the required repair tasks. More emphasis will be placed on the four systems in the fall of 1998 to ensure that they are Y2K compliant.

(6) Others

The Planning Staff of FSIS is in the process of developing an FSIS Business Contingency Plan for the Year 2000 scenario. The scheduled completion date is October 30, 1998.

A PC Sweep project is ongoing to check all PCs in both the Headquarters and Field offices for Y2K compliance.

Action is being planned to test and validate the Y2K compliance of the Headquarters HP3000 minicomputer, which is the host of several FSIS mission critical

application systems. The work will take place in October of 1998.

A Statement of Work is being developed to acquire outside support to perform Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V) of Y2K compliance for selected mission-critical application systems.

The FSIS Y2K team continues to support the Food Supply Working Group of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion. The Food Supply Working Group is co-chaired by Catherine E. Woteki, Under Secretary for Food Safety; August Schumacher, Under Secretary for Farm & Foreign Agriculture Services; and Michael Dunn, Assistant Secretary for Marketing & Regulatory Programs.

An FSIS Y2K web page is in operation. Its address (URL) is <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/om/y2k.htm>

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call me at the above telephone number.

To comment on this newsletter or to submit an article for publication, please contact:

Kevin Dressman
Editor, *The Service Beacon*
USDA, FSIS, ASD, EHSB
Room 2944 South
Washington, DC 20250-3700
Fax: 202.720.7124
kevin.dressman@usda.gov

The current and past editions of *The Service Beacon* are available electronically on the FSIS OpenDesk and Exchange mail systems as well as on the FSIS Website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OM/beacon.htm